

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Innovation • Partnerships • Safer Neighborhoods



OJP FACT SHEET

November 2011

Mentoring

Mentoring is based on the premise that predictable, consistent relationships with stable, competent adults can help youth cope with challenges and steer clear of high-risk behaviors. In a mentoring relationship, mentors provide guidance and support to help young people build self-confidence, learn positive behaviors, stay in school, and avoid potential pitfalls like drugs and gangs.

Mentors can be teachers, peers, or community members, and mentees can be young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. Mentoring services are offered in schools, community centers, religious institutions, school-to-work programs, and other youth-oriented facilities.

Background

In 1904, Ernest K. Coulter created a movement that used "big brothers" to reach out to children and offer them guidance, laying the groundwork for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America we know today. Since then, many other mentoring organizations have been formed. Organizations with mentoring programs range from national organizations such as 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, and the YMCA to local community, religious, and nonprofit organizations.

According to the National Mentoring Partnerships' Research in Action series, successful mentoring relationships are often part of larger youth development programs. These programs are marked by specific features that help promote developmental assets. These features include sustained, positive adult-youth relationships, youth life-skill building activities, and youth participation and leadership in valued community activities.

The overall success of mentoring programs depends largely on their structure and mentoring techniques. Short-lived, less-than-positive mentoring has been shown to have a negative impact on youth. However, stable, long-term mentoring can lead to positive results.

What OJP Is Doing

The Office of Justice Programs' efforts to combat youth violence and delinquency are aided through a variety of prevention and intervention efforts, including mentoring. OJP as a whole supports [National Mentoring Month](#), which celebrated its 10th anniversary in January 2011. This public service campaign recruits volunteer mentors to help young people achieve their full potential. OJP is also a partner in the [Federal Mentoring Council](#), which was established in May 2006 to bring federal agencies together to coordinate the development and implementation of mentoring policies and initiatives.

The [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#) (OJJDP) has supported mentoring programs for decades and provided \$97 million to support mentoring in 2010 alone. OJJDP's efforts focus on strengthening, expanding, and implementing youth mentoring activities and youth development programs throughout the country through grants to leading national and local organizations. Many of these initiatives focus on reaching at-risk youth and working with underserved populations including foster children, tribal communities, and juvenile offenders who are reentering their communities. In 2011, with funding from the Department of Defense, OJJDP awarded \$20 million to nine organizations to support mentoring programs and services for youth with a parent in the military. In the fall of 2009, OJJDP launched a "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" ad campaign to encourage adults to become mentors by learning about the benefits and availability of mentoring opportunities. The ad, which was estimated to have reached 3.5 million people, appeared in the game programs for the 2009 American League Championship Series, the National League Championship Series, the World Series, and the 2010 All-Star game.

Mentoring is crucial for individuals who are attempting to reenter the community, especially if the person was processed as a young adult. Under the [Second Chance Act](#), OJJDP and the [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) provide assistance for state and local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, public universities and colleges, and nonprofit organizations to provide mentoring and transitional services to juveniles returning from correctional facilities.

RESOURCES

- [Federal Mentoring Council](#)
- [Find Youth Info](#)
- [Mentoring Resources](#)
- [Second Chance Act Mentoring](#)
- [Blueprints for Violence Prevention](#)
- [Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters](#)
- [Mentoring In America 2005](#)
- [Mentoring: A Key Resource for Promoting Positive Youth Development](#)

Research in Action, Issue 1

Through mentoring organizations, youth are provided with programs that help keep them in school, out of trouble, and most importantly, put them in direct contact with caring adults who provide crucial support and guidance.

—Laurie O. Robinson
Assistant Attorney General
September 2010

FAST FACTS

Of the 17.6 million young people who could benefit from having a mentor, only 2.5 million were in formal, one-to-one mentoring relationships in 2005.

Most mentoring relationships last an average of 9 months, but 38 percent of mentors spent at least 12 months with their mentees.

Only 16 percent of mentors had mentees in the juvenile justice system, but 67 percent of mentors expressed a willingness to work with this population.

According to a study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program, little brothers and little sisters were 46 percent less likely than their peers without mentors to initiate drug use during the study period.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has provided more than \$500 million since 1994 to support juvenile and youth mentoring programs.

Sources: *Mentoring in America 2005; Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters; OJJDP Mentoring Resources Web page*

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